

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 237

USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, SOPN, FI

SUBJECT: EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL VISITOR
PROGRAM IN FINLAND

1. EXAMPLES OF VERY SPECIFIC EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
IVP PROGRAM ARE USUALLY DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY, THEREFORE
DEPT AND USIA WILL BE INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING:
TWO FINNISH IVP GRANTEEES, BOTH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND
GENERALLY CRITICAL OF THE UNITED STATES, HAVE WRITTEN
FAVORABLE ARTICLES IN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PRESS, ONE
OF THEM NOTING THAT AS A RESULT OF THE TRIP, HE HAD TO
SHED MANY OF HIS PREJUDICES CONCERNING AMERICA.

2. PAULI MYLLYMAKI, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
FOR THE FINNISH COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT PUBLICATIONS,
TRAVELED APR. 12- MAY 6, 1976. HIS ARTICLE, "AMERICA
IS DIFFERENT" WAS PUBLISHED BY FINLAND'S LEADING SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC NEWSPAPER SUOMEN SOSIALIDEMOKRAATTI (CIRC. 44,000)
JULY 3 WITH THE FOLLOWING LEAD:

"IN SPRINGTIME, I TOURED AMERICA FOR ABOUT FOUR WEEKS.
THE US STATE DEPARTMENT HAD INVITED ME, AND ON MY WAY THERE,
I THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS THEY WERE GOING TO ORGANIZE A REALLY
EFFICIENT CIA COURSE. BUT I DECIDED THAT AS I WAS WELL
EQUIPPED WITH A GREAT AMOUNT OF INFORMATION ABOUT AMERICA
AND AS I HAD A STRONG CHARACTER, I WOULD SURVIVE THE
BRAINWASHING. BUT IT WENT DIFFERENTLY. THEY SUCCEEDED.

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I RETURNED POORER OF MANY WONDERFUL PREJUDICES, AND FURTHER-

MORE, I CAME TO OBSERVE THAT THERE IS MUCH ELSE TO AMERICA THAN A COUNTRY OF BUSINESS, VIOLENCE AND CRIME."

THE ARTICLE ALSO COVERED URBAN GROWTH, THE HIGH STANDARD OF CULTURAL LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY AND THE ROLE OF AMERICAN PRESS.

3. MYLLYMAKI ALSO HAD A SIX-PAGE ILLUSTRATED ARTICLE "A BIG COUNTRY ON THE ROAD OF CHANGE" IN ME MAGAZINE, ORGAN OF THE CONSUMER COOPERATIVES' UNION (CIRC. 326,000) JULY 7 WITH A MOTTO "WHETHER WE BELIEVE IT OR NOT, AMERICA IN ITS BICENTENNIAL YEAR DESERVES A PRESENTATION OF ITS POSITIVE SIDE."

"I WAS MOST SURPRISED AT MY SCANTY INFORMATION ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY IN AMERICA. THERE ARE NOW 8 MILLION UNEMPLOYED AND I SUPPOSED MISERY WOULD PREVAIL EVERYWHERE. BUT THIS IS NOT SO,"MYLLYMAKI REPORTED AND WENT ON TO DESCRIBE IN DETAIL THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AND ITS BENEFITS, HEALTH INSURANCE AND PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE, THE "REVOLUTIONARY" CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF BLACKS AND THE GROWING POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG WOMEN.

4. SUOMEN SOSIALIDEMOKRAATTI REPRINTED ON JULY 3 IN ITS AMERICA SUPPLEMENT AN ARTICLE BY JORMA CANTELL, PAPER'S 2ND CHIEF EDITOR, IVP GRANTEE MAY 15 -JUNE 15, 1972. AT THAT TIME HE WAS THE INFORMATION SECRETARY OF THE FINNISH METALWORKERS' UNION. CANTELL WROTE ABOUT SMALL TOWN LIFE IN CAIRO,ILL., WHERE HE WAS ATTRACTED BY HIS ENTHUSIASM ABOUT MARK TWAIN. THE ARTICLE DESCRIBES THE ROLE OF THE RIVER IN THE LIFE OF CAIRO WITH SEVERAL REFERENCES TO TWAIN, AND IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE METALWORKERS' NEWSPAPER AHJO IN OCT. 1972.

5. THE FOURTH OF JULY WEEKEND SAW AN UPSURGE OF ARTICLES AND COMMENTARIES ON THE UNITED STATES IN THE FINNISH PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN THE PEAKING OF STEADILY INCREASED COVERAGE OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS DURING THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR AND INCLUDED A SPATE OF EDITORIALS TAKING STOCK OF AMERICAN PROBLEMS AND EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY OF THE US TO SOLVE THEM.

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6. THERE HAS BEEN A SLOWLY CHANGING MEDIA ATTITUDE TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER A LIVELY DEBATE ABOUT THE US IMAGE IN FINLAND WHICH WAS TRIGGERED BY AMBASSADOR MARK EVANS AUSTAD'S COMMENTS ON THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE US IN FINLAND LAST YEAR. ALSO THIS YEAR, THE AMBASSADOR PROTESTED OVER A SCHOOL RADIO PROGRAM ON THE US, AND THE RADIO PROGRAM COUNCIL, OVERSEERS OF RADIO PROGRAMS, PASSED A RESOLUTION STATING THAT THE PROGRAM WAS ONE-SIDED,

TENDENTIOUS AND GAVE A DISTORTED PICTURE OF THE UNITED STATES.

7. THE MOST NOTABLE EXAMPLE OF BICENTENNIAL-RELATED COVERAGE WAS THE LEADING SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC NEWSPAPER SUOMEN SOSIALI-DEMOKRAATTI, GENERALLY NOTED FOR ITS CRITICISM AND RESERVATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, WHICH CAME OUT WITH A 16-PAGE AMERICA SUPPLEMENT ON JULY 3. OTHER COVERAGE INCLUDED SEVEN PAGES IN THE SWEDISH-LANGUAGE DAILY HUFVUDSTADSBLADET AND FIVE PAGES IN CONSERVATIVE UUSI SUOMI DEVOTED TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF AMERICAN LIFE, PLUS CONSERVATIVE AAMULEHTI WITH A FOUR-PAGE AMERICA SUPPLEMENT. FINLAND'S LEADING DAILY HELSINGIN SANOMAT WAS CONTENT WITH TWO PAGES OF BICENTENNIAL COVERAGE, HAVING GIVEN HEAVY PLAY TO US AFFAIRS EARLIER DURING THE YEAR.

8. EMBASSY FEELS THAT THE IVP PROGRAM HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN PRESENTING CERTAIN KEY OFFICIALS AND WRITERS WITH A FIRST HAND OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE THE US AND THIS HAS BEEN INVALUABLE. OVERALL MEDIA TREATMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE INFLUENCED BY TRADITIONAL PRESSURES IN FINLAND, HOWEVER SPECIFIC ARTICLES SUCH AS THOSE CITED ABOVE WHICH ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE TREND ARE MOST ENCOURAGING SIGNS, AS WELL GENERAL INCREASE IN TREATMENT OF US, AND OBVIOUS GREATER CONCERN ON PART OF WRITERS AND EDITORIAL BODIES TO BE MORE ALERT AND TO GUARD AGAINST UNLICENSED DISTORTION.

9. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER MATTI AHDE WAS MET LAST WEEK ON RETURN FROM IVP VISIT TO US BY EMB. OFFICER WHO REPORTS AHDE EXTRAVAGANTLY PRAISED TOUR. JORMA REINI, CHAIRMAN OF FINNISH FEDERATION OF TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES AND ALSO SOCIAL DEMOCRAT WHO RETURNED FROM IVP TOUR IN JUNE REPORTED TO SAME EMB. OFFICER THAT HE HAD SHED MANY UNCLASSIFIED

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PREJUDICES WHILE ON US TOUR.
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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